

# **Minutes**

Talbot County Board of Elections  
215 Bay Street  
Easton, MD 21601  
*August 19, 2020*

## **Present:**

### **Board**

Joseph Secrist, President	(R)
Walter Black	(D)
Susan MacKinnon	(D)
Richard Bulman	(R)
Wadella Thomas	(R)

### **Staff**

Jeri Cook, Election Director

### **Board Attorney**

Lyndsey Ryan

### **Public**

Two members of the public attended

The monthly meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections was held on August 19, 2020. Due to restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, the meeting was held by videoconference. The public was invited to listen by conference call and advised via the Board website and on the agenda of the procedure to do so. Mr. Secrist called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM. Mr. Secrist noted that a quorum was present.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board had any corrections or additions to the minutes of the meeting of July 15, 2020, copies of which had been forwarded to the Board Members in advance of the meeting. Mr. Black moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **Addition/Changes to the Agenda**

Mr. Secrist asked that the proposed agreement with Ms. Ryan to serve as Board Attorney be added under new business. Mr. Bulman asked that the report on payments to judges and canvassers be discussed in closed session. Mr. Bulman moved approval of the agenda with these additions. Mr. Black seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

## **Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **Election Director's Report**

Ms. Cook reported that the State Board had approved the use of High Schools and previous Early Voting Centers as Voting Centers. She submitted Easton High School, St. Michaels Middle High School and the Easton Firehouse as the Voting Centers for Talbot County to the State Board. Ms. Ryan provided a written report on her conversation with Ms. Nikki Charlson, Deputy State Board of Elections Administrator. Ms. Charlson advises that the Local Board not the Election Director make the decision as to the number and location of Voting Centers in the county.

Discussion followed regarding the procedure to follow. Mr. Secrist suggested that further discussion on this topic be held under the "Consolidation of polling places" under Old Business.

Ms. Cook then reported that there will be 23 or 24 ballot styles of Talbot County for this election and that all ballot styles must be available at all the Voting Centers since the Governor has directed that voters may vote at any center in his/her county. She believes she will need approximately 23 election judges each day at the Early Voting Center and at the Voting Centers on Election Day. The State Board of Elections approved that early voting will occur each day from October 26 through November 2 and then November 3, Election Day, 7:00 am-8:00 pm. Based on three Voting Centers, she believes she will need approximately 120 judges. If the Board adds to the 3 Voting Centers that she has been planning for, she will need additional judges. Additional duties for the election judges will include sanitizing the equipment and common areas of the polling room after voters exit due to the pandemic. Election Judges will also be used as greeters to assist with line management and offer masks for those voters who do not have them when entering the polling place. This is to stay in compliance with the Governor's proclamation of wearing masks in public spaces as well as keeping the social distancing.

Regarding drop boxes, we will have 2 locations in Talbot County again – one at the Election Office and one at the Easton Firehouse on Leonard Rieck Drive.

The deadline for vote by mail applications is October 20, except for in person requests at the office which will be 8:00 pm on election day.

To date, we have received almost 1,800 applications for vote by mail ballots, much higher than the approximately 1,300 we received in the 2016.

Ms. Cook reported that the ballot styles and their printing will be determined by the State Board staff. It will be either 23 or 24 styles. Mr. Secrist asked that the Board be

advised as how many styles there will be and the basis for the number of styles. Ms. Cook sent an estimated budget increase to the County Manager of \$95,225. This will be a topic for discussion with the County Council on August 25. Ms. Cook was asked to provide a more detailed breakdown of how she arrived at the amount of the requested increase. Ms. Cook responded that what was presented to the county was a very rough estimate because it is difficult to know what the election will cost with the new processes to accommodate two types of elections.

Regarding our request for a secure web site, that request is being delayed until after the election.

### **Attorney's Report**

Ms. Ryan said she is involved in conference calls with the State Office and other Local Election Board Attorneys regularly to discuss the special situation the conditions this year present. She responded to questions regarding the draft agreement she submitted for consideration.

### **Old Business**

#### **a. Facility for Election Office**

There was nothing new to report.

#### **b. Budget FY2020**

A final report on expenditures for the year was provided to the Board. Ms. Cook expects no additional items.

#### **c. Review of Invoices**

Ms. Cook previously provided Board Members with copies of invoices received since the last meeting. She responded to questions from Board Members.

#### **d. Budget FY2021**

Ms. Cook previously provided the Board with a report on expenses to date. There were no questions from Board Members.

#### **e. County Bulletins**

Ms. Cook previously provided copies of County Bulletins July 17, July 31 and August 14. She also sent to Board Members copies of Election Directors Meeting Minutes from June 18 through July 30 to Board Members. Mr. Bulman noted that that he thought that they should be provided more timely, particularly given the rapid development of

procedures at this time. Ms. Cook said she could email them when received rather than provide them with Board Meeting materials.

f. Consolidation of polling places

The Board continued its discussion of Ms. Ryan's written report regarding her conversation with the State Board about the number of Voting Centers. The Board then proceeded to discuss the voting locations used in the past and their suitability for use as Voting Centers this year given the need to comply with social distancing, and their location for the necessary connectivity to the state to accommodate same day registration on election day. Ms. Cook answered questions regarding the number of judges she anticipates needing at each location and the ability to recruit the needed judges. After thorough discussion, Mr. Black moved that the Talbot County Board of Elections select Easton High School, St. Michaels Middle High School, Easton Volunteer Fire House on Leonard Rieck Drive and Tilghman Volunteer Fire House as Voting Centers for Talbot County. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Ms. Cook will notify the State Board of our decision. Ms. McKinnon asked that Ms. Cook meet with the newspaper and provide them with this updated information.

g. Attorney's Agreement

Ms. Ryan submitted an agreement for her services at Board Attorney for consideration. Following questions, Ms. McKinnon moved to approve the agreement. Mr. Black seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

**New Business**

There was no new business.

**Confirmation of next meeting**

Mr. Secrist asked if the Board wished to continue to hold Board Meeting by video conference call. Some Members expressed concern about in-person meetings. Mr. Secrist concluded that we will continue to meet by video conference. He noted that the next meeting of the Talbot County Board of Elections will be Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 9:30 AM by video conference.

Ms. Cook reminded the Board Members that they will be needed during this election for evaluation of the Voting Centers and the Early Voting Center.

**Board of Canvassers convene**

At this point, the Election Board meet as the Board of Canvassers. Actions at this meeting were recorded separately.

## **Closed Session**

Mr. Bulman moved that the Board go into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters as permitted under General Provisions Art. 3-305(b) (1). Mr. Black seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Whereupon the Board went into closed session at 11:15 AM via video conference. Ms. Cook arranged for a separate video conference to be set up, which was limited to the Board Members, Ms. Ryan and herself. She asked any members of the public to remain on the line for the open video conference meeting while the Board met separately.

At 11:55 AM, the Board returned to open session. President Secrist reported that the Board discussed salary and selection procedures for judges and canvassers during the Primary Election in the closed session and approved the minutes of closed sessions held on April 15, 2020 and July 15, 2020.


## **Adjournment**

Mr. Black moved adjournment of the meeting. Ms. Thomas seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:23 AM.

Attested,

  
Joseph H. Secrist, Jr., President

Respectfully submitted,

  
Richard B. Bulman, Secretary